NUMB. LXXI.

The GUARDIAN.

Quale portentum neque Militaris
Daunia in latis alit esculetis,
Nec Jubæ tellus generat, Leonum
Arida Nutrix. Hor.

Tuesday, June 2. 1713.

I Question not but my Country Customers will be surprised to hear me complain that this Town is, of late Years, very much infested with Lions; and will, perhaps, look upon it as a strange Piece of News when I assure them that there are many of these Beasts of Prey, who walk out Streets, in broad Day-light, beating about from Coffee-house to Coffee-house, and seeking whom they may devour.

To unriddle this Paradox, I must aquaint my Rural Reader that we polite Men of the Town give the Name of a Lion to any one that is a great Man's Spy. And whereas I cannot discharge my Office of *Guardian* without setting a Mark on such a noxious Animal, and cautioning my Wards against him, I design this whole Paper as an Essay upon the Political Lion.

It has cost me a great deal of Time to discover the Reason of this Appellation, but after many Disquisitions and Conjectures on so obscure a Subject, I find there are two Accounts of it more satisfactory than the rest. In the Republick of *Venice*, which has been always the Mother of Politics, there are near the *Doge*'s Palace several large Figures of Lions curiously wrought in Marble, with Mouths gaping in a most enormous Manner. Those who have a Mind to give the State any private Intelligence of what passes in the City, put their Hands into the Mouth of one of these Lions, and convey into it a Paper of such private Informations as any way regard the Interest or Safety of the Commonwealth. By this means all the Secrets of State come out of the Lion's Mouth. The Informer is concealed, it is the Lion that tells every thing. In short there is not a Mismanagement in Office, or a Murmur in Conversation, which the Lion does not acquaint the Government with. For this Reason, say the Learned, a Spy is very properly distinguished by the Name of Lion.

I must confess this Etymology is plausible enough, and I did for some time acquiesce in it, till about a Year or two ago I met with a little Manuscript which sets this whole Matter in a clear Light. In the Reign of Queen *Elizabeth*, says my Author, the renowned *Walsingham*, had many Spies in his Service, from whom the Government received great Advantage. The most eminent among them was the Statesman's Barber, whose Sirname was *Lion*. This Fellow had an admirable Knack of fishing out the Secrets of his Customers, as they were under his Hands. He would rubb and lather a Man's Head, till he had got out every thing that was in it. He had a certain Snap in his Fingers and a Volubility in his Tongue, that would engage a Man to talk with him whether he would or no. By this Means he became an inexhaustible Fund of private Intelligence, and so signalized himself in the Capacity of a Spy, that from his time a Master-Spy goes under the Name of a Lion.

Walsingham had a most excellent Penetration, and never attempted to turn any Man into a Lion whom he did not see highly qualified for it, when he was in his Human Condition. Indeed the Speculative Men of those Times say of him, that he would now and then play them off and expose them a little unmercifully; but that, in my Opinion, seems only good Policy, for otherwise they might set up for Men again, when they thought fit, and desert his Service. But however, tho' in that very corrupt Age he made use of these Animals, he had a great Esteem for true Men, and always exerted the highest

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